

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /080 W

-----093887 291936Z /41

P R 291720Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7501

INFO AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMCONSUL NAPLES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF NOVEMBER ADMINISTRATIVE  
ELECTIONS

REF. ROME 12424

1. THE POLITICAL PARTIES THAT SUPPORT THE ANDREOTTI MINORITY GOVERNMENT ARE AGAIN WEIGHING THE POSSIBILITY OF POSTPOING THIS NOVEMBER'S ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS UNTIL NEXT SPRING. THESE LOCAL ELECTIONS, EVENLY DISTRIBUTED THROUGHTOUT ITALY, COULD BE AN IMPORTANT TEST SINCE THEY INVOLVE ALMOST 10 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL ELECTORATE. THOSE IN FAVOR OF POSTPONEMENT ARGUE THAT THE POLEMICAL SPIRIT OF PARTISAN POLITICS THAT ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES ELECTION PERIODS COULD BE A DANGEROUSLY DESTABILIZING FACTOR, CAPABLE OF THREATENING THE PROGRAMS ACCORD. THOSE AGAINST POSTPONEMENT AFFIRM THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS SHOULD NOT BE TAMPERED WITH FOR POLITICAL CONVENIENCE. STRONG OPPOSITION WITHIN THE DC'S PARLIAMENTARY

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GROUPS AND MORE CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS EFFECTIVELY SHELVED AN EARLIER EFFORT LAST JULY TO POSTPONE THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELCTIONS. THE PROPOSE SURFACED AGAIN DURING THE INTER-PARTY NEGOTATIONS TO RESOLVE THE LATTANZIO AFFAIR.

2. THROUGH SPOKESMEN WHO ARE CLOSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER, ANDREOTTI HAS CLEARLY INDICATED HIS SUPPORT FOR POSTPONEMENT

PROVIDED A POLITICAL CONSENSUS ON THE ISSUE CAN BE ACHIEVED. THE PRIME MINISTER EVIDENTLY REGARDS POSTPONEMENT AS ENHANCING THE STABILITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT. THE COMMUNISTS ALSO FAVOR THE PROPOSAL BUT FOR DIFFERENT REASONS. THEY FEAR THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL DEMONSTRATE A PSYCHOLOGICALLY DAMAGING SETBACK IF THEY FAIL TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF STEADY ELECTORAL GAINS. ALTHOUGH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND LIBERALS APPEAR TO HAVE TAKEN TACTICAL POSITIONS AGAINST POSTPONEMENT (NO PARTY WISHES TO EXPOSE ITSELF AS UNWILLING TO FACE AN ELECTION TEST), THEY ALSO SHARE THE FEARS OF THE SOCIALISTS AND REPUBLICANS THAT THE ELECTORAL TREND TOWARD POLARIZATION TOWARD THE DC AND PCI WILL CONTINUE AT THEIR EXPENSE.

3. OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, THE DC HAS BEEN SOUNDING OUT THE OTHER PARTIES ON THIS ISSUE. ON SEPTEMBER 29, DC PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI MET SEPARATELY WITH FANFANI AND DONAT-CATTIN, THE TWO DC LEADERS MOST OPPOSED TO POSTPONEMENT. IF, AS IT APPEARS INCREASINGLY LIKELY, THAT OPPOSITION WITHIN PARTS OF THE DC AND THE PSDI AND PLI CAN BE OVERCOME AND A POLITICAL CONSENSUS IN FAVOR OF POSTPONEMENT ESTABLISHED, THE GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY HAS PREPARED A DECREE LAW WHICH COULD BE APPROVED AT THE SEPTEMBER 30 CABINET MEETING. HOLMES

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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